

# Socialist CLARITY

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## WHERE WE STAND

*A Program for Revolutionary Socialism*

For a United Party of Revolutionary Struggle . . . .	GUS TYLER
An Organizational Draft for Our Party . . .	FRANK N. TRAGER
Our Face to the Masses . . . . .	BEN FISCHER
Who Hinders Left Wing Unity . . . . .	AN EDITORIAL
Labor Party Discussion Outline . . . . .	ERNEST ERBER

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# WHERE WE STAND!

## Introduction

THE BOUND BROOK PROGRAM (Draft for a Program for the Socialist Party, Call Press, 1935. 10c) is still fundamentally sound. That it represented the point of view of the revolutionary Socialist elements is indicated by the unanimity with which it was adopted at all Left Wing gatherings. (Bound Brook, Chicago and Louisville, 1935. Cleveland, 1936. New York R.S.E.S., Nov. 1936.) Therefore the drafting of a basically new program is not necessary. Even as it stands today, the Bound Brook Program could be adopted by the Socialist Party without apologies. The fact that the Party as yet has no program, but only a Declaration of Principles, which may be revised or completely changed at every convention or even more frequently, makes a re-statement of basic principles by revolutionists essential from time to time. This is done not in the form of the writing of a completely new program, but in the adaptation of the old one to new conditions; in the elaboration of items which may be dealt with only as broad principles in the basic program. It is in this sense that the following program, adopted by the New York Left Wing, is herewith presented for discussion by the entire Party.

This program is not at all a final or complete docu-

ment. There are undoubtedly many problems which are important but which are not dealt with. But the program was not intended as a complete document. It emerged rather as a minimum on which Left Wing unity might be attained and is presented to all left wing groups in the Party. Some of the sections in the program may appear needlessly detailed or concrete. But this feature is also essential. Unfortunately, there are still many comrades in the Party who are ready to sign any program, vote for any resolution, and then violate them in practice. Comrades today pay lip service to the Bound Brook Program who in their daily work in the Party, in the trade unions, among the workers, are living examples of the opposite of this program. It is therefore necessary not only to agree on broad generalizations, but also on their application to the working class. Practice is the testing ground of revolutionary theory. In a sense therefore, the program is a minimum program of action for the Left Wing. It can be expanded, but it cannot be reduced. To the task of really securing a revolutionary program of action, we invite Socialists thruout the country. The columns of SOCIALIST CLARITY are open to you.

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## A PROGRAM— for Left Wing Unity

### The Road to Power

THE BACKBONE of the capitalist state is made up of the army and the bureaucracy. When all other instruments of power fall from the hands of the capitalists, they resort to the army and the bureaucracy to maintain their rule. These instruments of permanent reaction make a purely peaceful transition to power extremely unlikely.

No working class rule can be established unless this army and bureaucracy are shattered. The capitalist state, therefore, can not be taken over for working class purposes, can not be reformed by law, can not be democratized by parliament. It must be smashed. And this can only be done by the organized and direct force of the workers.

A parliamentary majority for the working class is improbable, and in America almost impossible. But even should the workers win a parliamentary majority on the

basis of a Socialist program and then be permitted to come into office (which is almost entirely excluded) there would still be need of a force to meet the capitalist counter-revolution.

The orientation of our party on the road to power is not some shibboleth to be repeated by party theoreticians. It is a practical guide to action. A pure electoral machine or educational society among mass organizations can not expect to play the role of revolution in the event of a new great crisis. If the party seriously believes its own theories on the road to power it must so conduct its day by day work as to be in a position to take power through revolution.

This does not mean that the Socialist Party shall neglect the parliamentary struggle and the fight for civil liberties. Quite the reverse! The parliamentary campaigns and the struggles for civil liberties are means of organizing the workers against capitalism. But all such campaigns must

be part of a general preparation of the masses for revolutionary struggles on the extra-parliamentary front.

## The War Question

The task of Socialists operating in capitalist countries which have entered a war is to oppose that war with the object of weakening the government and converting the imperialist war into a war upon capitalism.

Unless this program is advanced by Socialists in all the capitalist countries of the world, the workers must once more do bloody service for their masters, dividing the world according to empires instead of classes.

The Socialist Party calls upon the workers of all the world to reject support of both their Fascist and democratic countries in the event of a war.

If the Soviet Union is involved in a war, the Socialist Party of the United States calls upon the workers of the world to come to its defense. Such defense does not include the false defense given by capitalist pseudo-allies of the Soviet Union, who will turn against the Soviet Union when it suits them. Defense to the Soviet Union must be rendered through direct workers' support in the form of proletarian brigades, money and ammunition to Russia, strikes against supplies going to Russia's enemies. In the capitalist countries which are allied to the Soviet Union the class struggle must go on: the workers must refuse support to the war; and the forces unleashed by the war must be organized by the workers and turned upon capitalism itself for the establishment of a workers' regime.

The Socialist Party calls upon the working class to rouse the colonial peoples and to give them support in their wars against imperialism. But never should such support of the workers be given through the channels of support to the government of capitalism. Direct workers' support, through international brigades, through strikes aimed at goods for the imperialist, through funds and ammunition for the colonies, through blocking the imperialist war machine.

The Socialist Party believes that a war conducted by a Popular Front government, resting upon the old bourgeois army and bureaucracy, against another foreign government is, like all other wars of capitalist nations, undeserving of class support. Should the French Popular Front government go to war today, against Fascist Germany, the task of the working class would still remain that of opposing the conduct of the war, striking against the war, undermining the government and converting the war into a revolution.

The only foreign war which workers will support is one of colonial people against imperialism and one conducted by a state in which the old army and state machinery has been smashed and replaced by a workers' state.

## Collective Security

Because the Socialist Party is opposed to supporting any and all capitalist wars in every country of the world,

it likewise stands in irreconcilable opposition to all collective security.

Those who support collective security under any conditions are merely leading the working class into support of a new imperialist war.

The Socialist Party does not support collective security even when it is made palatable by conditions about reduction of arms, renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy, renunciation of industrial mobilization plans, etc.

## Neutrality

The Socialist Party does not believe that neutrality laws passed by a capitalist nation can keep America out of war. The Socialist Party will not oppose such legislation as will make it more difficult for capitalism to go to war, but, at the same time, the Socialist Party will warn workers not to put any faith in such legislation, which will be torn up on the day America gets ready to fight.

Such neutrality legislation as injures the cause of workers fighting a civil war for freedom, of colonial people fighting for liberation, of the Soviet Union fighting against capitalist powers must be fought openly and bitterly by the Socialist Party.

The pacifist view of neutrality—neutrality at all times—is definitely rejected by us. We favor or oppose specific neutrality legislation as it specifically affects the interests of the working class. And we ALWAYS declare that this legislation, no matter of what variety, CAN NOT keep peace in the world or in America.

## People's Fronts

The Socialist Party rejects the policy of class collaboration both on the economic and political fronts. Only militant working class action for working class aims can fight the forces of reaction.

The Socialist Party is unalterably opposed to a Socialist taking office in any coalition government which rests upon the old bourgeois state apparatus: the reactionary army and bureaucracy.

The Socialist Party is opposed to any political alliance between the working class and bourgeois parties, resting upon an agreement to limit the action of the proletariat in the present period to the defense of the bourgeois democratic program, and to declare a moratorium upon the class struggle for a working class program.

Our slogan: Socialism versus Capitalism! is the basic strategic slogan of our present epoch with its struggles against war and fascism. This slogan means that we do not believe it possible to fight Fascism or war, by clinging to the status quo, but only by unleashing the class struggle on all fronts.

For this reason the Socialist Party rejects the theory and practice of Popular Frontism in toto.

The People's Front is the political expression of class collaboration—another form of coalitionism. We are not



opposed to electoral agreements, or united front as opposed to popular fronts. To reject the philosophy of popular frontism is not merely to reject entrance into a bourgeois cabinet, which in the U. S. is technically almost excluded, but also to reject that extra parliamentary activity which must flow from Popular Front philosophy: namely softening the class struggle to gain the friendship of the democratic bourgeois politicians in a period of combat against reaction.

## Party Integrity

The Socialist Party does not believe that the mere dissemination of the idea of the cooperative commonwealth among the masses can guarantee the victory of Socialism. Neither do we believe that the masses, without leadership of revolutionaries, can willy-nilly stumble into Socialism.

Socialism will only be victorious when there is a strong revolutionary party with roots in the masses. Only such a party can successfully lead the masses into Socialism.

TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENT ROLE OF THE PARTY IS IN THE PRESENT PERIOD A PRINCIPLE QUESTION.

*Those who would liquidate the party or who would obscure its program for the masses are surrendering the fight of Socialism, no matter what their ideas on the ultimate road to power may be.*

*Similarly those who would merely "build a party" with no thought as to the basis upon which we are building, as to our role in the struggle against war and fascism, as to the need for a party, which can conduct a direct and open struggle for power in time of crisis, are likewise surrendering the fight for Socialism.*

The Socialist Party of America does not want to build another huge house of cards, like German Social-Democracy, which will collapse with the first puff of reaction.

To maintain the integrity and independent role of the party it is not only necessary to have a revolutionary line but also to avoid entangling political alliances with other working class parties or political tendencies whose program is basically different from ours. United fronts for specific purposes are necessary and desirable, but general blocs which will blur our line in essential mass work are treacherous to our party and our cause.

## Labor Party

The Socialist Party favors the creation of a Labor Party in the United States in the present period. A Labor Party would represent a giant step forward for the American workers; it would separate millions of proletarians from the bourgeois parties; it would politicalize their thinking and action.

The Socialist Party, in its propaganda for a Labor Party must not only point out its value but also emphasize its limitations. Likewise the maintenance of the integrity and independence of the Socialist Party, not as an educational, but as a political instrument is BASIC and PRINCIPLED and UNCOMPROMISING.

The danger that the Labor Party movement, which is essentially progressive, may be turned into Popular Front channels is very great in America. This does not deter Socialists from advancing the slogan of an INDEPENDENT CLASS LABOR PARTY against the Popular front slogans of a trade union bureaucracy. Such a slogan for independent political action can separate the masses not only from the capitalist parties but also from the various reformist trends in the labor movement.

We reject the policy of entry of the Party membership as individuals into Labor Parties, nationally, or on a state or local scale.

## The Party and the Youth

Party political integrity must be maintained among the youth as well as in the adult field. Attempts to liquidate the youth organization, either by a merger with the YCL, or by conversion of the YPSL into a cultural, social and educational kindergarten, must be stamped out. The YPSL has an independent role to play among the youth and must be permitted a great freedom, and autonomy in dealing with all youth questions.

The YPSL must act, before the public, in accord with the party line. Hence it should be given the right to discuss and formulate policies that apply to all Socialists. The fullest freedom of opinion to all members of the YPSL in the determination of the YPSL or Party policy is essential to the health of our party or the youth. Any attempts to establish a party caucus or a YPSL caucus in the party must lead to friction, to a split, to a stultification of the youth organization and disruption in the party.

## Trade Union Policy

Without sinking its roots deep into the trade unions, the Socialist Party must remain a sect, without influence among the organized and unorganized workers. While this has been recognized in theory in the past, in practice, trade union work has been a minor activity of the party, both locally and nationally. Only a small portion of the membership is in the trade unions, an even smaller portion is active, and serious resistance toward party guidance and discipline manifests itself constantly. The entire orientation of the Party must be changed. Trade union work is not the work only of the trade unionists, but of the entire party.

In building its influence in the trade unions, the Party must support all progressive measures which will transform the unions into fighting organizations. It must work with all progressive elements for the promotion of such measures. While doing so, however, it must not hide its own face. The Party must preserve its independence and freedom of action by having a program of its own beyond the program of the progressives; by building up the Socialist Leagues to which all Socialists must belong regardless of their status in the union; by refusing to enter into a general "bloc" or permanent alliance with opponent organizations in the trade unions; by constantly, though carefully, advancing the general political pro-



gram of the Party in the trade unions. The Party must guard against building up a set of "labor leaders" who refuse to take directions from the Party, fail to work for the Party if it injures their status as leaders, carry on no recruiting and build up no Socialist Leagues. The Party receives the blame for the misdeeds of such comrades, but does not profit from their good work.

### The Soviet Union

The bureaucratic distortions of the proletarian regime make it necessary for the workers of the world and of the Soviet Union to demand the extension of democratic rights to the working class. This demand includes the right to organize other open political parties of the working class resting upon the maintenance of the essentially proletarian economy of the Soviet Union.

The Socialist Party of the United States joins with the Labor and Socialist International in calling upon the workers of the world and of the Soviet Union to resist any foreign intervention into the Soviet Union on the part of capitalist powers and to rally to the military defense of the Soviet Union, through the channels of working class action.

### Party Democracy

Repeated experiences of the working class have proven that party democracy is not just some phrase for the mouths of minorities in a party nor the product of devotion to broadmindedness. The absence of democracy and democratic procedures can only lead to the creation of a Comintern, a British Labor Party, an Old Guard Socialist Party, and in the final analysis to such practices as now mark the Soviet trials. Party democracy is a PRINCIPLE!

Party democracy can not be maintained unless persons or groups in the minority are permitted to speak their mind, even if it be foolishly, or tactlessly, within the party. Administrative action in the form of grievances and charges can not be brought against the comrades for political characterization of their party comrades. To make such criticism a ground for charges makes all criticism impossible, for the champion of an unpopular cause will always be accused of villainy and lying and the majority will sit in judgment upon him.

Party democracy means the right of comrades of like mind to organize to advance their views in the party. Such groups or individuals have the right to issue printed matter and call meetings, so long as such are conducted for party members only.

Effective party democracy can only be maintained while significant minority groups in the party are given representation on leading and minor committees. To deprive any important minority group in the party of just representation means to prepare a party split.

Party democracy today means the extension of the elements of party democracy to the Trotskyites and pacifists as well as to all other comrades. The Socialist Party has no second class citizens.

Party democracy, in spirit as well as fact, can only be preserved while responsible and leading party comrades foster a spirit of comradeship, maintain a policy of integration to all party groups, and stamp out all tendencies to provoke a split in the party by the expulsion of this group or that group which one comrade or another decides is unassimilable. The task of the leadership is to map a policy and carry through a line; if there be any who are unassimilable, practice will show.

## A WORD TO OUR READERS

Dear SOCIALIST CLARITY Reader:

In spite of its belated appearance, SOCIALIST CLARITY has a job to do and intends to do it. This first number is necessarily limited in its contents, because it was essential above all to present the *general point of view* of the Left Wing. We hope to be able to publish at least two more issues before the convention. the coming issue will contain a series of proposed RESOLUTIONS for the coming convention. In addition it is essential to publish at least one issue containing DISCUSSION articles.

But, this cannot be done without cooperation of CLARITY adherents thruout the country. We invite articles, resolutions, discussion material. SOCIALIST CLARITY will be what you make it. Let's make it a real instrument for revolutionary clarification.

THE EDITORIAL BOARD



# FOR A UNITED PARTY OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE!

By GUS TYLER

**W**HEN we split with the Old Guard, there were very few comrades who believed that the Socialist Party was now a truly revolutionary party—both in theory and practice.

The statement of principles, *which received the votes of those who opposed the Old Guard*, was always looked upon as a document which marked a "step forward." We never conceived it to be a clear statement of a revolutionary position. We looked forward to early improvement.

Our heaviest and most burdensome heritage from the Old Guard, however, was not the confused statements of theory, but the way in which the party functioned. Inasmuch as the policy of the Old Guard was NOT to take a stand on basic questions of tactics and strategy, it was impossible for them to evolve a LINE in mass work. They made a principle of keeping hands off all hot questions. They sought to build a party on the basis of some vague devotion to a set of ethical principles, without disciplined and directed mass activity on the basis of a political line.

Although within the last year the Socialist Party, in a few centers, has begun to do some disciplined trade union work, by and large we do not have a party which carries through a revolutionary line in mass organizations. The student movement is probably the only field in which the party nationally operates as a disciplined revolutionary force, and here too our comrades have had great difficulty in working with some of the leaders who believe that it is below them to submit to Socialist discipline in mass work on a revolutionary line.

For two reasons our party has fallen down in MAKING ITSELF A REALLY REVOLUTIONARY PARTY OF STRUGGLE:

First, because our conglomerate National Executive Committee has been operating on the theory that all major decisions must be practically unanimous, a distillation of points of agreements. With the many diverse elements in the NEC, no really strong directives could issue.

Second, because our party leadership, nationally and locally, has not consciously set itself the task of constructing a disciplined party, with mass directives, with centralized campaigns, with FRACTION WORK IN MASS ORGANIZATIONS.

We are paying the price for our failure to work out a line and a real party machine. Within the party there is abnormal confusion, dozens of different lines, expressing themselves publicly as well as in the party. For example: Our party took a definite stand on the war

question at the last national convention. This war resolution was hailed as an essentially revolutionary document, marking us off from the elements which are preparing the ground for sacrificing the working class in a new international slaughter. But what happens in the process of carrying out this resolution?

Comrade Lash, a leader in the student movement, comes out for collective security, for democratic wars—in a book written jointly with a Communist.

Comrade Edlin in the Jewish Day writes signed articles in diametric contradiction to our party stand.

Comrade Jack Altman, at a public conference in Camp Naivelt, speaks *against* Comrade Zam, who presents the official Party viewpoint on war. Altman speaks in favor of a position practically identical with that of the Communist Party.

Louis Sadoff returns from Europe and the Party sponsors a big meeting for him. He presents a position entirely at variance with that of the Party on Peoples Front, war, democracy and fascism, — and then resigns from the Party!

Here we are, living in crucial days . . . before a new war. In panic, the Communists, the Old Guard, the "democrats," the liberals, are leading the masses into a new war. The Socialist Party, aware of this grim tragedy ahead, raises its banner against war and bourgeois maneuvers in preparation for war. And even as we do it, on this question of BASIC PRINCIPLE, dozens of comrades, leading comrades, work in the open to undermine our party position. Is it any wonder we can not grow?

Who would join us? The milk-and-water Socialists, who used to gather around the Old Guard like flies around honey, won't join us: our *documents* are too revolutionary. Militant workers can't join us: we have no line for them in mass work. All we can attract now are STUDENTS OF THE REVOLUTION, intellectuals, theoreticians, talkers, writers—but never militant proletarians.

Hence we find our party falling to pieces under our very eyes, rotting within and battered from without. These are not pretty words; but how long can we go on without speaking what we all know?

From the coming convention there must ISSUE A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY IN PRACTICE AND THEORY.

We say at "the coming convention!" As our comrade Thomas has so repeatedly insisted: there is little time ahead of us in America! We must act fast. As a party of



confusion, no matter how individual comrades slave and work and sacrifice themselves for our cause, nothing will come of it unless such work is the expression of a sharp political line before the masses. We who have stuck by our party under so much fire and often with great sacrifice during the last years have not done so just because we want to maintain an organization. We have done so because we believe that we have a mission to perform in America. The next few years will set giant forces into motion in this country. Either revolutionary Socialism, organized into a disciplined party rooted in the masses, will be ready, or over America will settle a dark night of sorrow and pain. *The coming convention will be the test of how serious we are!*

Not only will we betray our trust if we do not take the revolutionary road at our next convention, we will also find ourselves wiped out as an organization. Reformism in America is well represented—all shades of it! We have no place in America except as a party of mass struggle on a revolutionary perspective.

OUR BASIC SLOGAN FOR THE COMING CONVENTION IS:

*We must come out of it as a revolutionary party with a revolutionary majority in the National Executive Committee!*

WHAT MARKS THE REVOLUTIONARY?

The watershed of Socialist theory—separating the revolutionary from the reformist—is our conception of the nature of the state.

The revolutionary believes that the state—that is, the army and the bureaucracy—can not be voted out, coaxed out, reformed out, or taken over by popular mandate. The capitalist army and state bureaucracy must be smashed—and they can only be smashed by force.

Because this perspective—smashing the capitalist state machinery in the form of old army and bureaucracy—is always before the eyes of the revolutionary, he devises a political line which (a) refuses to take responsibility in a bourgeois state, which (b) relies only upon the struggle of the masses to fight against reaction. For that reason, a revolutionary rejects every form, shape or manner of coalitionism, entrance into bourgeois regimes resting upon a capitalist system. Revolutionaries oppose class collaboration in all forms, and therefore reject entirely the concept of the People's Front.

Lastly, because the revolutionary is not fooled by the form of bourgeois rule (although recognizing the advantages of certain types of rule) he does not believe in supporting a war of a democratic bourgeois regime against a fascist bourgeois regime. Revolutionaries oppose all capitalist wars. Revolutionaries distinguish themselves from pure pacifists in that revolutionaries wish to utilize the forces unleashed by the war to take working class power to build a workers' army, to shatter capitalism and build Socialism on the basis of workers' democracy!

Many years ago, however, there developed inside the labor movement a tendency which, while ready to underwrite almost any sort of a document, consistently refused

to make such basic principles a guide for day by day action.

Consider the Communist Party today. Its program still calls for: 'proletarian dictatorship, soviet power, and armed insurrection. Yet its entire line of practice today stands in direct contradiction to its basic principles.

Have the Communists given up their principles? They say: No! They have merely consigned theory to the realm of theory. Their principles are like the ritual of some dead religion; something to which one pays homage on highdays, holidays and conventions. But which, of course as all practical people know, has nothing at all to do with their daily practices.

For years, German Social-Democracy conducted a "right wing" policy on the basis of Marxist theses. *Serious revolutionaries want a revolutionary line in theory AND in practice!*

WHAT ARE THE TENDENCIES IN OUR PARTY TODAY?

There are numerous tendencies in the Party today which will subscribe to a revolutionary Party in theory and violate it in practice: *Liquidationists*, who want to be "with the masses" even to the point of giving up the Socialist Party. *Parliamentarian Socialists*, to whom nothing but a large vote is vital. *Pacifists*, who are so opposed to violence that they are willing to tolerate the violence of capitalism forever rather than use it *against* capitalism. *Sectarians*, who talk about "vanguard," "revolution," but who shun the masses, substitute the Party for the Class and thus reduce the Party to impotence.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TROTSKYITES

The Trotskyites, as opposed to the various right wing and centrist tendencies in our party, are essentially revolutionaries. On the basic questions of a revolutionary program: the state, Popular front, and the war question, they stand with the revolutionaries against the right and centrist elements.

The Trotskyites, moreover, stand with the other revolutionaries in the party against liquidationism, against pacifism, against parliamentary Socialism, against popular frontism, against national defensism. Hence, on all the basic revolutionary questions the Trotskyites and all revolutionary Socialists should be able to work together.

A few words have to be said, however, about the background and tradition of the Trotskyites.

For nearly a decade the Trotskyites were not a party, with their face to the masses, but a fraction of the Comintern, trying to bludgeon or reason Stalin into turning in a new direction. Only three years ago did the Trotskyites decide to become a *party*, instead of a faction. Formally, they made a "turn to the masses." Formally, the Trotskyites understand the need for and the methods of mass work. But only formally! Actually, because of a habit formed over nearly half dozen years, they remain essentially a Stalin opposition.

The world campaign of slander, vilification and frame up, to say nothing of physical mutilation, beatings, mur-



ders, conducted by Stalin against the Trotskyites has created what psychologists call a paranoia complex among the Trotskyites. In self defense they have to strike back! And in doing so, they base a crusade upon the illusion that all evil stems from Moscow.

There is only one way in which we can break through this habit; namely training in new habits. Where the Trotskyites have been able to come in contact with mass work for some time, as in Minneapolis, their mere theoretical position has not interfered with successful mass work.

The peculiar background of the Trotskyites—a decade of compulsory isolation—has made it difficult to assimilate them. But likewise, the peculiar background of the Socialist Party, a loose, gangling, organization, has not at all aided in assimilating the Trotskyites. It is also a reflection upon the party when it fails to assimilate successfully a group of 1000 people or thereabouts.

Our party lacks three things necessary for assimilation:

First, we lack a body of political theory; a system of tactics and strategies; a clearly defined concept of party structure and organization; a decisive attitude toward other parties and groups in the labor movement.

Second, our party does not and has not conducted centralized mass work on the basis of a clear revolutionary political line. Such mass work is the chief instrument for tying people into the organization, for building up morals and discipline.

Third, leading comrades, especially in the large and important New York organization, did not want Trotskyites in the party to begin with, were just praying for them to make slips to be played up, set to work to hasten the day when they could expel the Trotskyites and say: "I told you so!"

Instead of a serious effort at assimilation, we are treated to the spectacle of groups being formed with but one program: "Expel the Trotskyites." Around this slogan a campaign is conducted. A hysteria is created in the Party—a split atmosphere. Name-calling and rumor are substituted for political argument; horror tales are invented; differences are exaggerated and common purposes minimized. In this unhealthy atmosphere, constructive work is impossible.

We must put a stop to these splitting trends in the party. *And we must stop them immediately!*

Our party can not assimilate the Trotskyites or anybody else unless we hammer out a program, a line in mass work, campaigns, and a willingness to assimilate, not assassinate, new elements. Apparently some of our comrades have learned only one thing from their old guard experiences: how to imitate them!

#### THE TASKS OF A NEW NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

During the next years, our national executive committee has certain concrete problems to face.

First, it must put the Socialist Party of the United

States on the map as THE REVOLUTIONARY party of the United States. The bulk of the American people still consider us the "party of evolution" and the Communist Party the party of "revolution." We gain nothing by such illusions; and we lose much with growing class conscious and militant elements.

This task must be carried through along three lines:

- a) by direct polemics with other tendencies
- b) by public statement of our position
- c) last, and most important, by challenging all other tendencies in the labor movement for leadership among the masses—by our line in mass work. The masses will follow us only on the basis of the line they see us advancing before mass organizations.

The National Executive Committee will be unable to do such work unless, first, it is seriously ready to drive forward for disciplined fraction work, and, second, is determined to take a sharp and clear stand in accordance with our broad revolutionary perspectives in regard to all current developments.

Second, a concrete estimate of our party strength and influence today will reveal that there is a crying need for leading personnel, trained comrades, politically advanced. Our party is still in the process of making itself a party! We are now in the stages where we must concentrate, more than normally, upon developing our comrades so that they may become the separate and connected centers of mass work!

In such intensive schooling, we must draw liberally upon all the political lessons that can be derived from events in the more advanced labor movements of other countries. We must also permit a completely unchecked and free discussion of political ideas within our party. These are not days for stuffing the party line down the throats of comrades by administrative measures and charges. We must build a homogeneous party with two instruments: a political line and persuasion.

Third, because of our limited forces today we must know in what fields we should concentrate within the next two years.

a) we must root the party in the basic industries, autos, rubber, steel, maritime, etc. No effort must be spared to gain a foothold here. These workers will in the near future be the spearhead of the organized labor movement.

b) the unemployed. In this field, where the masses come in direct and immediate conflict with the state, even for their own economic demands, we find all the reformist elements backing down before Roosevelt—even after his so-called betrayals. A militant line among the unemployed will give the Socialists clear and undisputed leadership.

c) the farm elements, especially in the South. The Socialist Party must never forget the STFU is the first giant organization to challenge the slave pen domination of the Dixie Bourbons. We must see the STFU as a wedge to make a drive throughout the whole southland.



d) on the cultural front. Dozens of leading American intellectuals have swung away from the Communist Party during the last two years and thrown their support to us. To no little extent, the Trotskyites have been making probably the richest contributions to our movement on this front. For the first time, the Socialist Party can build an intellectual and cultural movement to challenge any in this country or perhaps—the world.

Fourth, our new NEC must launch such campaigns as will publicly mark our party off as a revolutionary organization. The Debs Brigade has served its purpose along these lines. Other such dramatic campaigns must be devised and pushed.

The overshadowing problem during the next few years, however, will be the question of a labor party. It will be raised in every union; we will have to define our attitude toward it in a number of states; as the present economic struggles of the masses bring the workers into clash with the state and thereby underline the need for independent political action, the question will become ever more burning.

Last minute decisions about what to do once a Labor Party stands challengingly before us are worse than worthless. They make us conduct our fight with weapons always chosen by our enemies. We generally get the worst end of the bargain.

Now—we must define our stand toward Labor Parties.  
REPRESENTATION OF TENDENCIES

It is important to recognize the fact that there are varying tendencies inside our Socialist Party. A mechanical majority at any convention can, if it so desires, give all seats to itself.

The leading committees of a working class organization must reflect the tendencies in the movement. Minority groups must have representation on such an NEC. This does not mean that the NEC should not take a firm position and give clear directives. It does mean that in the leading councils of the party should be spokesmen for all important groups so that decisions may be made after the voices of the minorities have been heard.

THREE LINES GUIDE US AS WE COME TO THIS  
CONVENTION:

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY LINE

FOR A MARXIST VANGUARD PARTY OF MASS  
WORK

FOR UNITY AND FULL DEMOCRACY IN THE  
PARTY

## An Organizational Draft for Our Party

By FRANK TRAGER

MILWAUKEE, 1932, or who shall be national chairman of the party; Detroit, 1934, dubious coalitions for decision on principles—the first in many years; Cleveland, 1935, partial elimination of the Old Guard but not of its traditions—this is the record of a party membership (1) struggling to clarify its theoretical Marxist foundations in the light of objective conditions and (2) attempting to make of the party an organization instrument geared for action.

Obviously the party has not yet succeeded in these correlative tasks. The left wing in this process has given much to the party, gained valuable experience, insight and growth, but still bears a burden of errors of omission and commission. It has once again the opportunity of discharging a great portion of this burden at the coming Chicago convention.

There is no denying the fact that since the Detroit convention there has been a salutary increase in written (as well as spoken) discussion which may lead rapidly now to theoretical clarification. But curiously enough, since May and June of last year when the *A.S.M.* published articles by Coolidge and myself on "The Functions of the N.E.C." (Coolidge, *A.S.M.*, vol. 5, no. 3) and "Party Perspective Present and Future" (Trager, *ibid* vol. 5, no. 4) there has appeared no discussion on this second (of the two) problem of the coming convention.

There is no need here to repeat the arguments and proposals made there. The N.E.C. is calling the convention which was then requested; it *has* made moves in the direction of centralization by creating an Action Committee to carry out the implications and mass perspectives of the party's central campaign slogan. (The Old Guard and progressives did go Roosevelt). Some N.E.C. subcommittees *are* beginning to function, albeit inadequately.

Surely it ought to be abundantly clear to the Left Wing as it faces Chicago that it must provide, by convention decision, at least some of the machinery through which the theoretical clarification now going on can be translated into the life of the party not only in a few annointed locals but throughout the country. (Actually, if some sections of the left wing would care to proceed with a degree of comradely patience rather than sectarian hardness, a large part of the membership would willingly accept and be educated into the theory and practice of revolutionary Socialism.)

### II

The Left Wing has always maintained the need for a centralized, democratically controlled party, with a party owned press, a leadership that functions, a fully staffed secretariat and a corps of field organizers for party and mass work. If these are to be more than pious aims—How are we to get them?



The answers which follow are based on these assumptions: (1) There will be a united left wing free from its present sins of sectionalism, e.g. Trimble's letter to left wingers deliberately omitting any in Local New York; and sectarianism, e. g. Goldmans' insistence that first we polarize *within* the left wing and then maybe come together rather than the reverse; and factionalism in some quarters in New York, which is taking the direction of a move to expel the Trotskyites. (2) That the left wing at Chicago will take major responsibility for the leadership of the convention and the to-be-elected N.E.C. (3) That the left wing, though not numerically at this time the majority in the party, actually represents the majority of party leadership throughout the party.

With this before us, what must we do?

1. *Scrap the Constitution.* This means adopting a completely new constitution, the provisions of which will embody our orientation. It means liquidation of foreign language federations and substituting party committees to promote such work. It means the elimination of states' and locals' rights and replacement by a truly national constitution. By this I mean that the national constitution must invest power in the ruling bodies sufficient to organize and reorganize states, to prescribe the conditions of membership, to regionalize organizational activities so as to benefit states and locals but at the same time cutting across state and local boundaries when necessary. The national constitution should contain sections which in effect will be the prescribed state and local constitutions—leaving to states and locals the specific right to issue non-conflicting by-laws.

The Y.P.S.L. should be included as a self-governing but not autonomous section of the party.

Provision should include an annual reregistration of the membership similar to that now practiced by the Y.P.S.L. but in addition serving as a census of the membership. This means that each January every member would get a new membership card and supply the party with necessary information as to his activities and mass organizational affiliations.

## 2. *The National Leadership:*

(a) An N.E.C. which, in the words of Albert Sprague Coolidge, "should be substantially homogenous in order that it may be capable of quick, decisive and consistent action . . . it should comprise a very substantial majority of representatives of the prevailing camp . . . it is not the place for proportional representation or any similar attempt to secure a balance of opinion."

The N.E.C. ought definitely be a left N.E.C.; that means we must take responsibility for the party and remove ourselves from the negative role of left oppositionists. The N. E. C. ought not be a geographical body but one chosen for its political leadership. A sub-committee of the N.E.C. or a quorum of the N.E.C. should be a continuously functioning action committee.

This, of course, brings up the question of the location of the party headquarters. There are three possibilities:

A mid-western city - Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh or Chicago - where the base of the party is median but which is strategically located with respect to the mass production industries: Steel, Autos, Rubber, Refinery, Packing, Mining; Washington, D. C., where there is no mass base but where there is direct contact with the instruments of the capitalist state, including the press. (The presence of a mass base is, of course, extremely important to the national office at this stage of the development of the party. It thus becomes a determining factor which must be considered *at this stage of operations* whereas otherwise it would not be a determining factor.) New York City, which has a mass base and in many ways is the radical, political center of America. Its national and international importance and outlook however also serves as a liability for its point of view seldom embraces the actual state of affairs in any particular area outside of its boundaries. For example, Westchester county (population 750,000) just north of the five counties of New York City, is almost terra incognita to the New York party.

(b) A national executive secretariat adequately staffed, working in conjunction with a resident action committee which must include editorial staff of party press. This must mean a staff that will include, for example, labor and other mass work, educational, foreign language, and all the other necessary divisions whose absence at this time is to a large extent responsible for the "isolation" of the national office.

(c) A field staff of regional organizers in regional offices. Here it should be pointed out that it is high time for the entire left wing to furnish the party with comrades for training for field and office work.

That there is a dearth of trained personnel is everywhere apparent but the absence of training is not an insuperable obstacle. What is the case is that the left wing has not yet produced a sufficient number of comrades who are willing to become "professional revolutionaries" or "footloose rebels." At the moment there are locals and states without organizers even after they are prepared to finance the cost involved. Obviously a new type of recruiting and training must go on in the party; recruiting from the party for full time work and training by the party for such.

This conception of a national party with a political and organizational leadership, conscious of its direction, its obligations to its membership, the need for establishing regional offices, for training personnel will remain "lame" and "halt" if not blind unless it solves two problems; Finance and Press.

Beyond doubt the only way to finance the strictly party functions is by abolishing the present uniform dues system and substitute for it a membership income tax, prorated on a national, state and local basis. The income thus provided should be used for the fixed, recurring items, the total budget disbursed on a pay-as-you-go plan. Added activities should be taken on as the growth of the party justifies. Mass work—that is, work in the trade unions, Workers' Alliance, youth fields, etc., will, if properly directed, pay for themselves by combining direct



appeal to the liberal and radical fringe and by the party swinging into action as a party of struggle, when a struggle arises, e.g., Spain, Maritime Strike, Auto Strike, etc.

Finally, all of the foregoing will not of itself carry into the far corners of our membership unless the party has a press, unless the press reflects the national as distinct from the sectional, sectarian point of view.

Undoubtedly this will be further discussed but as a beginning I suggest that the Left Wing answer the following questions: Does a party press mean an N.E.C. or Action Committee or state or locally owned press? Shall the press necessarily be centered at the same location of the national headquarters? Is one national weekly (even a daily) enough? What distinctions, if any, shall obtain between public and inner organs? What respective responsibilities will be necessary?

There must be a press owned by the party which is the creature of the party conventions and N.E.C. As rapidly as possible it should issue regional editions, i.e., western, southern, eastern, etc., with uniform editorial policy but not necessarily uniform format, etc. The editorial staffs shall always be officials appointed or elected by the N.E.C. as are all other officials, e.g., executive secretary, labor secretary, educational secretary, etc. The press should be centered at the national and regional headquarters. The press should include publication of as many party owned public organs as can be supported, e.g., *A.S.M.*

This in no way should infringe upon the rights of individuals to publish inner party organs. If an inner, privately owned organ received more support than a party

organ it would mean that either the party organ should adopt the position of the other or the other group took power in the party.

How does this apply concretely? What will we do with the *Call*, *Labor Action*, *A.S.M.*, *Appeal*, *Socialist Clarity*? The last two will be published by individual groups. The *Call* and *A.S.M.* should become party owned papers with *Labor Action* the first of the regional papers. Does this mean that the Party headquarters and the *Call* should be at the same location? I think so - if not, there always will be the absurd situation in which the press and its group actually decides for the party. If it is argued that the party cannot go to New York and the *Call* cannot be supported in Chicago, I should say that both are wrong. Actually, the base for the paper is as real in the midwest as it is in the east. Actually, too, the party location in New York would profit by the politicalization of the movement which takes place in New York.

In any event the decisions we reach at the Convention will to a large extent determine our future existence. The area of agreement between the left forces within the party should be stressed; the area of disagreement should be temporarily tabled though recognized. If we are to remain yet awhile an all-inclusive party, it follows that no monolithicism should be advocated even within the left wing. Let us find a common major political level and apply it for a period after which we can then re-examine our perspectives. Only by such a method of successive periods of crystallization and practice can we be assured as revolutionary Socialists that our principles and actions are really relevant to objective conditions.



# OUR FACE TO THE MASSES

By BEN FISHER

THE TASKS ahead for the Party should be clear to every Party member. The coming Chicago convention must be a decisive one. Here we must break with the blundering past and face the future boldly. A disciplined centralized setup, adequate financing of the national organization, an unequivocal policy of disciplined work in the mass organizations, a clear mandate to every Party section that trade union and unemployed work are the main jobs ahead, and a mandatory system of activity and reports are absolutely essential. These are the key questions.

What shall our trade union policy be? What shall our Labor Party policy be? What is our role in the fight against war and fascism? All these things take on great importance IF we make provision for a Party machinery which can function and a Party organization rooted in the ranks of the workers, farmers and unemployed. We can never arrive at a correct day-to-day policy unless it is a policy implemented by directives to the Party organization in the unions and the essential mass organizations.

What difference does it make what attitude we adopt toward a Labor Party if we are not going to be in a position to press this attitude in the ranks of the masses of America? What difference does our policy on war make if all we do is expound it among students and middle class *sentimentalists*? Unless we mean business in becoming the leaders of the working class, we are fiddling while the working class is marching into non-Socialist camps.

Anyone who knows the membership of the Socialist Party today can readily understand that the greatest danger is sectarian isolation, not so much because of what we are doing but because of what we are not doing. In the mass movements our Party will play a correct role because it is a party of militant class-conscious working people who act in the interests of the workers WHEN WE ACT. When we really begin to act everywhere (we are acting in some places even now) then the questions of policy will become sharper and sharper. Today they are largely academic. The coming year offers great opportunities for rooting our organization among the masses. THIS IS OUR MAIN TASK.

We cannot do this without understanding the independent role of the Socialist Party in mass activity. We are not merely the builders of the working class movement. We build, we sacrifice, but in our building we give direction.

Today our trade union resolution can form the basis for our work. The coming convention would do well to elaborate on its content and to see to it that the section on Socialist leagues be made to conform to the accepted party policy as laid down by the November NEC meeting. But essentially it is correct. Every important trade union problem can be solved in the light of its four-point statement of principles: no class collaboration, for trade

union democracy, for independent working class action on the political field, and for industrial unionism. In our work every important trade union problem must be examined in the light of this program.

Socialists do not merely work to make Party contacts in unions; they work to give militant leadership to their fellow-workers in the face of every assault, every betrayal, every opportunity. We not only meet situations, we foresee them and prepare the workers for them.

Similarly on the question of war, we have an adequate program even though it may need revision and clarification as a result of further discussion and examination. But we must understand that as yet NOTHING has been done to put into action the present program of the party on war except in the youth field. This youth work constitutes a good step, but the students of themselves are not going to stop war. We all know that the workers can stop war and can abolish war.

We talk about independent working class sanctions, but what do we do about working among maritime workers who can really do something about this policy? What have we done to realize our policy of no reliance on the government in the fight against war? We have not only not carried out this policy in a positive sense in the trade unions and mass organizations, but we have allowed deviations from this policy in mass work of Socialists.

On each point of our program the story can be repeated. This convention has a real job to do. We must be sensible and intelligent. There are still forces in the party which are hesitant; they must be dealt with in a comradely Socialist fashion. But they cannot become the determining group in this convention. Even though disputes must be threshed out and workable solutions arrived at, above all the party must be equipped to assume its role as the revolutionary party of the workers.

The convention cannot content itself with mere half steps. This convention must mark the full step toward Party centralization. The National Executive Committee must clearly represent the active vital revolutionary forces in the Party. Those of us who have been complaining for years—during the years of the old guard rule and later the transition to a left leadership—will be in a majority and will have the opportunity to give positive leadership in building the kind of a party we have wanted.

Nor can we fear centralization because this might result in our having to do things some of us might not entirely like. We don't live in a Socialist vacuum. We live in a world of strikes and struggles, wars and revolutions. We not only must begin to develop a crystal clear pro-



gram, but we must begin to root the Socialist party in the life stream of the struggles of the working class of America and the world. To delay and equivocate for another year or two because the NEC might not be a hundred and one per cent revolutionary and therefore may do things we don't want done would be a serious error.

The convention resolutions, the whole character of the membership and our press, and the character of our local leadership through the country, are sufficient safeguard for the essential revolutionary integrity of our party. Now is the time to go forward.

Socialists cannot be young enthusiasts who shout slogans with no regard for reality. Some comrades are saying—"Go easy. Be careful. We must educate and educate first. Later when we have educated every remaining Socialist to the point where he is a Talmudist in Marxism, then we can really get down to business." This counsel of patience has one good quality. It will counteract any tendency toward action without thought and education. We must study and discuss and examine our position. The new members and the uneducated members must be given schools and literature which will acquaint them with Socialist theory, history and tactics.

But this counsel of patience is good only in its place—as a frequent reminder. It cannot become the dominant note in our party. Nor can it be allowed to gain dominance through any back door; it is possible to advocate the building of a revolutionary party and yet act in such a manner as to make our party a mere revolutionary discussion group. Let the coming convention make adequate provision for discussion and study but above all, the convention must provide for a party which lives in the daily struggles of the workers.

Aside from matters of structure, procedure and finances for a revolutionary party, there are two other vital matters which the Chicago convention must deal with: the labor party and our relations with other groups.

The labor party question is dealt with separately in this magazine and elsewhere. However, it is important that one thing be stressed. No realistic Socialist policy on the labor party can have meaning unless it is adopted for a party which can influence the actions of the trade union movement. A policy which is confined to leaflets and speeches cannot be a truly correct one; a correct labor party policy must flow from the life of the party in the unions.

Our relations with other groups presents a real problem. We must learn and learn well the tactic of the united front. The fact that the CP has so emasculated it, first on the ultra-left and now on the right, is no valid reason for us to overlook the importance and necessity for the united front. We are grounded firmly enough politically and organizationally to begin to think seriously of an aggressive united front policy.

Socialists have always been for working class unity in action. In the past there have been unfavorable conditions but now the prospects of united front action are more favorable. Also, we cannot overlook the fact that one of the best ways to fight against the vicious attempts of

the CP to isolate the SP in the name of "Trotskyism and counter-revolution" is by pushing for united fronts on a sound basis whenever the need arises. This cannot be made the main reason for an aggressive united front policy, but surely it is an important consideration.

Such a united front policy must utilize the progressive demands of the trade unions and it must take into account the character and role of the pacifists and student groups in the anti-war struggle. It is time that we gave *leadership* to the pacifists instead of *leaders*. These people are opposed to war. Moreover, there is a great deal of discontent with the theory of collective security, with the League of Nations, with the Roosevelt government and even with the conception that there can be peace under capitalism. They are an element, active and enthusiastic, which can be won over. They must be criticized for their errors, such as those apparent in the often expressed outlook on the Spanish struggle, but it should be a criticism designed to persuade and not to alienate. In action, more than anywhere else, we can gain recruits and build support for our position against war.

This is true also of the students and their powerful anti-war movement. There are errors existent among student opponents of war, less than in most fields, thanks to the work of Socialist students. But here we find it impossible to give a real labor content to the student anti-war movement until there are sections of the labor movement around whom a sound student anti-war movement can rally.

It is necessary to deal with the Communist Party. Some people see as the task of the SP in this period the reform of the CP; others think in terms of the destruction of the CP. But in either case there is one path we must avoid at all costs—we cannot become a left opposition. Criticize! Oppose! But our most important enemy is capitalism and our job is to bolster up every progressive step of the workers and lead it further. There is real danger of our developing an attitude toward the CP which will lead further and further toward a Socialist theory of comuno-fascism. The Communists are not our main enemies. In some cases (fewer and fewer unfortunately) the Communists play a progressive role and must be our allies. In other cases intelligence and aggressiveness can force the Communists to tone down or to entirely discard their opportunist line. Some of our experiences in the trade unions and in the student movements have shown this to be true.

In criticism let us be firm and comradely; in politics let us be aggressive and realistic; in united actions let us be insistent on our rights and genuine in our solidarity. The Communists are a danger to our growth and influence only if we follow a policy of do-nothing or see-nothing. But let us prove to the masses that we are the best and most militant fighters for the workers struggle against the inroads and attacks of the capitalist system. Let us point out what we see, the falseness of the CP policies.

In this way we can go forward, win the respect of the Communist workers despite any lies, slanders and provocations spouted forth by the Daily Worker. In this way



we can win to our ranks all those who seek the Party of social revolution, not only in talk but in deed. Many a Communist groans at the gyrations and opportunism of the CP line, but they cannot see the SP because the SP offers them no leadership, no positive revolutionary channel for action.

Examine each problem the Party faces and we see that there can be no real solution of that problem except as we build the party into a revolutionary instrument to give guidance to the workers struggles. For several years we

held conferences and discussions about our programs. The task of evolving a program for the Socialist Party has, by far, not yet been completed. But this convention meets at a time when it is essential that we concretize the gains we have made in developing our Party from a loose, reformist political machine (a pretty poor one at that) to a disciplined revolutionary party. We do not reach the culmination of ideological development first and then build a party around it. The two processes must be parallel. The time has come for action.

## EDITORIALS

### WHO HINDERS LEFT UNITY?

LEFT WING UNITY IS A SLOGAN to which every revolutionary Socialist subscribers. It is an objective which the group associated with SOCIALIST CLARITY has sought for a long time and which must still be assiduously worked for. Every one in the Party who knows anything at all, knows this. The founding of the *Socialist Call*; the Bound Brook Program, the series of Left Wing conferences; all these activities were largely inspired by the group putting out SOCIALIST CLARITY, and these activities were all inspired by the desire to stimulate and build a united left wing.

It is somewhat strange, therefore, to watch the antics of some of the comrades in the Party, in the East and Middle West, who are doing their best to characterize us as the destroyers of Left Wing unity. The attack is all the more interesting since it comes simultaneously from two directions, from two groups which in turn are at each others' throats. We refer to what we shall designate as the Appeal group of Comrade Goldman, Burnham and Schachtman, and the so-called Altman-Lash group in New York City. Let us deal with each in turn.

THE APPEAL GROUP wants Left Wing unity. How have they gone about securing it? When the National Left Wing met, the Bound Brook Program and the Cleveland War resolution were adopted as the political bases of the left wing—unanimously. When the R.S.E.S. was formed in New York, the same was done, also unanimously. And this was on November 7, 1936. But suddenly, on February 7, we are informed by the leaders of the Appeal group that the Bound Brook Program is outlived. What has happened between November 7 and February 7, a period of exactly three months to have made the Bound Brook Program outlived? Now we are informed that the Cleveland War resolution is a "centrist" document. Pray what makes a document revolutionary in February and centrist three months later?

Some weeks ago, the Appeal Program appeared. One of its most important sections was an attack upon those "so-called left wingers" who believe that in addition to

the right danger in the Party, there is also a sectarian danger, and that consequently the strategy of the left must be for a fight on two fronts. The Appeal Program specifically declared that a left winger who held this theory was not a left winger, but a centrist, and the purpose of such a theory was the organization of a struggle against the real left. Whom did the Appeal have in mind? Was this a wild shot, an abstract generalization? No! The Appeal group knew definitely that it was the comrades in the New York and National Left Wing, the collaborators on SOCIALIST CLARITY, who held this theory. We were and are convinced that the Party is threatened both with the danger of right wing opportunism and of "left" sectarianism; that the genuine left wing must carry on a struggle on two fronts; that only in the course of combatting both these deviations can a revolutionary Socialist Party be crystallized. Furthermore, we are convinced that while within the Party as a whole, the right danger is at the present time the greatest, within the ranks of the Left Wing the spirit of sectarianism is very strong, and must not be encouraged. Knowing all this, the editors of the Appeal deliberately launched an attack which could have only one objective — *to split the Left Wing*.

That this statement in the Appeal Program was not an accident is further demonstrated by the meeting of the Appeal Group in New York, at which we were officially designated as the "left" centrists, and by the subsequent issue of the Appeal, which confirmed this designation.

Under these conditions, it is in place to ask the Appeal group why they continue shouting for unity with us. Why? On what basis? For what objective?

Let us be perfectly clear and frank. The Appeal group has broken left wing unity. We can pass over the secondary organizational matters, such as the publication of a Program, with national signatures, without having informed a single leading Left Wing comrade of it, or of the refusal, after having first consented, to the publication of SOCIALIST CLARITY as the organ for the entire Left Wing nationally. But can we overlook the *political acts*? Comrades of the Appeal Group, do you take us for



children? You reject our political basis (the Bound Brook Program and the War Resolution); you reject our inner-party strategy (the fight on two fronts); you place us outside your concept of a left wing by designating us as "centrists," even if you do throw in the word "left"; in your own inner party strategy, you direct your main blows at us. Can you maintain these positions and expect to be credited with sincerity in your protestations for left wing unity?

Left Wing unity, yes. But not unity for the purpose of having a cat-and-dog fight. Not unprincipled unity. Unity for a positive program and not merely against another faction. Show by your political line and by your deeds that this is the sort of unity you wish and you will find us ready.

THE ALTMAN-LASH GROUP is also very desirous of unity with us. As proof, they have just issued a circular thruout the country which, for lying, vilification and slander, can hardly be equaled. We do not intend to insult the intelligence of CLARITY readers by entering into a discussion of the picayune issues the circular raises. One example will suffice. The circular declares that we "had arbitrarily read out of the left wing well-known militants and had formed a separate caucus without them." The truth is quite the opposite. Jack Altman, after many months of consistent opposition to the organization of a left wing, after refusing to come to an agreement in the left wing steering committee on a slate for executive Committee members, called a meeting of some former militants, and a lot of non-militants, selected a slate, elected a steering committee and then came to "negotiate" with us. That is how they were "read out." When we asked them to dissolve their separate caucus as a method of re-establishing militant unity, Altman countered by inviting us to join his caucus as individuals.

The Altman caucus is an unprincipled conglomeration, which is held together by one bond—hatred of the Trotskyites and a desire to drive them out of the Party. No better example of their unprincipledness can be cited than the circular itself. Referring to their group and the Clarity group, they declare, on the first page: "Between the two groups there is practically no difference in basic theory." But later in the document, this is forgotten. Here are a few choice quotations about us: "very much like the reactionary Old Guard, they fear the idea of a Labor Party for they fear contact with the masses. Such contacts would destroy their pretty illusions of the 'revolutionary upsurge' of the workers." "Their entire outlook, however, tends toward DeLeonism and monolithism," etc. Could any principled person write such contradictory estimates of the same group in a single document? Can any one who reads the *Socialist Call* or the *American Socialist Monthly*, or is at all acquainted with the activities and position of the comrades in the Party believe the nonsense contained in the Altman statement?

But to understand the position of the Altman faction, one must go back a bit further than its actual organization and trace its evolution, or rather the evolution of the elements comprising it. Immediately after the Cleveland convention, the question arose as to whether a left wing organization is still necessary. The elements of the present

Altman group believed that it was not; and under their pressure, the Left Wing practically went out of existence. When after the elections were over, the R.S.E.S. was formed, these same elements, led by Sobotko, Marcus, Perrin (who had before the split constituted the right wing of the New York militants, who were in fact merely anti-Old Guard, and not at all Militants) organized a pogrom against the R.S.E.S. and against the idea of tolerating a left wing group in the Party. Their motion to illegalize caucuses in the Party, almost a copy of a motion introduced at one time by the Old Guard, was barely defeated in the Central Committee, and a motion which illegalized them by surrounding them with numerous restrictions was carried by a close vote. This is the element which today constitutes the backbone of the Altman group and which wants "left wing unity." These principled opponents of all caucuses did not at all hesitate when it was a matter of organizing a caucus to fight the Militants and to grab power in Local New York.

THE ATTITUDE OF LEADING MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP TOWARD THE *Socialist Call* is another indication of where they stand and how deeply they desire unity. The *Call* is today better than it has even been in its history. All over the country, comrades are enthusiastic for its realistic reporting of labor struggles, for its clear revolutionary position on national and international questions, for its representation of the Socialist Party as a leader of the workers. But the Altman caucusites are not satisfied. They pine for the days of the Levenstein-Romer *Call*, when nothing could find its way into the columns but abstract Socialist tracts. The *Call* of that time was a disgrace to revolutionary Socialism. Who wants to get it back? Even the Altman group dare not say so openly; they proceed by devious channels. The rumor is assiduously circulated that the *Call* is a Trotskyite organ; that the *Call* is against the Labor Party; that it is sectarian; that it tends to be anti-Soviet Union; that it is too negative, etc. At the Call Association meeting, the *Call* policy is overwhelmingly endorsed, altho Altman and his followers make bitter speeches against the policy. (When the voting takes place, Altman demonstratively abstains.) But this does not prevent an attempt by the Altman forces to remove the Board of Directors and substitute their own representatives, including people who have never done anything for the *Call* and do not care for it today. This group does not have enough principles to change the policy directly and openly; it wants to change the policy indirectly and covertly by electing a board which will then gradually change the policy.

THE ALTMAN GROUP ACCUSES US OF MONOLITHISM, but their own statement belies them. Not we but they are the monolithists, and their imonolithism extends only to the right. They accuse us of wanting to give all groups representation on all bodies in the Party. We plead guilty. We believe that in a healthy Party all tendencies not only should, but must be represented on leading committees, on delegations. Let there be an interchange of opinion. Party democracy does not function in a void. It is not an abstraction. It must express itself in the possibility of all tendencies contributing to and influencing the line of the Party and the work of the Party. Can this be done without representation on leading



committees? The Altman group wants to exclude the Trotskyite tendency from such representation, but is extremely anxious to give it to the Wisconsin tendency. Is this merely discrimination, or does it indicate a political affinity?

In the New York Central Committee the Altman group fought vigorously against any form of proportional representation on the delegation to the National Convention. Its representatives, Marcus, Sexton particularly, declared that the majority must get *all the delegates, and not merely* the majority. This is monolithism. This is anti-democratic. This will lead to an intolerable situation inside the Party. This we will oppose bitterly. This attitude the Central Committee defeated and will continue to defeat.

The central element of the orientation of the Altman group is anti-Trotskyism, not merely in an ideological sense, but in the sense of a desire to drive out of the Party those they characterize as "Trotskyites" — and if the *Call* is Trotskyite, who isn't? Such an orientation can only lead to a Party split on a small or large scale. We cannot countenance it. The first prerequisite for Party building today is Party unity. Any group which refuses to subscribe to this is itself anti-Party. It must be perfectly clear that there cannot be any left wing unity which is not based on the struggle for Party unity. Let the Altman group and the Appeal group state their position on this central issue if their demands are to be taken seriously.

## THE COMMUNIST LINE IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY

AS WE WERE ABOUT TO GO TO PRESS A NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS came to hand which require serious comment. This will be done extensively in our next issue. However, a few words must be said now about them, even at the cost of omitting some other items from this issue.

The documents consist of: A pamphlet by Paul Porter, entitled "Which Way for the Socialist Party?" published by State Executive Board of the Party in Wisconsin; a printed leaflet entitled "A Call to Duty," issued by Fred-eric Heath, a Party member in Wisconsin; a lengthy mimeographed bulletin and circular letter, issued by the Connecticut "Committee of Correspondence," and last, but by no means least, an "Appeal to Socialists," published by the Communist Party, and containing articles by all their shining lights, advising the Socialist Party on the best methods of committing suicide.

The Wisconsin leaflet and the Connecticut bulletin we can pass over briefly. The first is an out-and-out Old Guard document, consisting mainly of vicious attacks on Norman Thomas, liberally sprinkled with red-baiting, individual slander, and old Guard distortion of Party history and developments. It is a forthright appeal, to the extent that anything in it is forthright, for a restoration of Old Guard rule in the Socialist Party. Obviously it will receive scant support from the Party membership. The Connecticut bulletin is obviously the work of C. P. agents in the Socialist Party, who somehow or other have man-

aged to retain their membership cards. It speaks of the Party and its institutions in the terms in which the C. P. always speaks of the Trotskyites. Its very lack of moderation will reveal this bulletin for what it is to the Party membership.

But the Porter pamphlet and the C. P. "Appeal" are in a different class. They are not merely tirades against "Trotskyism," although there is plenty of that in both. They are a serious effort to change the present line of the Party to that of communist opportunism, with people's frontism as the spearhead. Of course, Porter's political gyrations are well known. It was not difficult for him at all to sign the R. P. C. program and at the same time to father the "Commonwealth Plan," for buying out the capitalists. When the Bauer-Dan-Zyromski thesis was issued he was one of its few supporters in this country. His imbibing of Wisconsin socialism in the past year has served to soften him up sufficiently for the Communist line to take him over without a struggle. Porter's pamphlet, with a few trimmings about Socialist history, with some local color and Socialist language (after all, Porter has the advantage of Browder of knowing the internal Party situation at first hand, and not from second- or third-rate stooges) presents us in a single dose the present Communist line as the only savior for the Socialist Party. Why mince words? We can accept the Communist line direct from Browder or indirect from Porter. But it is still the same line!

PORTER IS NOT EVEN SUBTLE IN HIS ATTEMPT. Not only does he urge the adoption of the entire Communist line on People's front, collective security, democratic wars, armament for "defensive purposes"; not only does he repeat the Communist "warnings" against "Trotskyism" and "sectarianism"; not only has he taken over all the Communist estimates of the Socialist revolutionary activities, such as that the *Socialist Call* is a Trotskyite organ; not only does he repeat verbatim the pet Communist slogans (for example, "keep war out of the world"); *he has gone to the extent of apologizing for the past sins of the Communists*, by simply swallowing entirely the Communist "explanations" of their past lines! Thus: "Until 1929 the Communists were torn by internal factionalism." This is exactly the Communist explanation as to why they had to throw out all dissenters beginning in 1928-29—to get rid of factionalism! Explaining the era of "third period" lunacy, Porter declares: "They pursued a class struggle policy but were restricted in influence by their sectarianism until approximately 1934." Everything became fine when the "new line" began! But who was responsible for these sectarian policies? Was it by any chance the Comintern itself? Listen to Porter: "After the ousting of the Communists from the Hankow government in 1927 by Chiang Kai Shek the attention of the abler Bolsheviks was absorbed almost wholly in momentous domestic problems. The Communists in other countries, not yet comprehending their tasks, pursued a policy of splitting and of dual unionism and were isolated from the mainstream of labor." Thus, in true Communist fashion, Porter manages to place the responsibility for all the mistakes



and failures on the lower organizations. The top leaders were and remain omnipotent!

It is a bit too much to expect that all of these things find their way into a pamphlet written by a single person, and a Socialist at that, by accident. One might become an advocate of the People's front. One might repeat the Communist slogans. But when one does all these things, and in addition also apologizes for those Communist policies which he disowns, it represents only one thing—a conscious effort to "sell" not only the Communist line but also the Communist Party to the Socialist Party membership.

It is extremely unfortunate that this pamphlet, which might otherwise have passed as the point of view of a single individual, should have been published by the Wisconsin organization, with an introduction by the State Secretary, thus giving it at least a semi-official status. Porter's defeat in his own Local as delegate to the National Convention of the Party may or may not be a repudiation by his constituents of the policies proposed in his pamphlet. There must be no such doubt about the reaction of the Party membership in the rest of the country.

The Communist "Appeal to Socialists" is one long tirade against "Trotskyism" and one long insult to the

Socialist Party. It is an open and determined attempt to split the Socialist Party: It declares "Those closest to the Trotskyites, by getting hold of the apparatus of the national office and the *Socialist Call* have a monopoly by the means of reaching and influencing the membership . . ." If this is true, and if it be true that Trotskyites are counter-revolutionary, then one, and only one course must be pursued—throw them out; throw out Roy Burt, Frank Trager, Art McDowell, Maynard Krueger, for they control the National Office. Throw out Norman Thomas, Devere Allen, and the rest of the National Executive Committee, for they put the "Trotskyites" into control of the national office and are keeping them there. Throw out Gus Tyler, Max Delson, Herbert Zam, etc., for they control the editorial policies of the *Socialist Call*. Throw out the 400 or 500 revolutionary Socialists throughout the country who constitute the Call Association, for they keep the "Trotskyites" in the editorial board. In short, throw out all those Socialists who resist the adoption of the Communist policies. Put in their place the Connecticut Committee of Correspondence (Communist controlled), the Indiana Socialist Action Committee (ex-Socialists, now members of the Communist Party) and—Paul Porter.

If this is the Communist program, it will find the Socialist rank and file ready for the battle.

## INTERNATIONAL NOTES

### PROGRAM OF THE INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY

(The following program, reprinted from the British New Leader of January 19, is a brief statement of the position of the I.L.P. We believe it will be of great interest to our readers.)

*By Constitutional or Revolutionary Methods?* The I.L.P. will use "Constitutional" methods just as far as the Capitalist class will allow, but the development of Fascism shows that the ruling class will destroy democratic institutions when they fear that the working class will use such to end their position of privilege. The I.L.P. therefore prepares the workers for a revolutionary struggle.

*Compensation or Confiscation?* The I.L.P. does not recognize any more moral right for compensation for loss of property than for loss of a job. It would give the worker who loses a job an honourable living maintenance, and it would give the owner, whose property is taken over by the community, an honourable living maintenance until an opportunity occurs for useful work properly rewarded. The dispossessed widow or aged would be honourably maintained just as others from whom work could not be expected.

*The League of Nations.* The I.L.P. regards the League as a Capitalist institution, dominated by Capitalist Governments with Imperialist interests. It does not believe that the League can maintain peace within the Capitalist system, and recognises that any "collective system of peace" under the auspices of the League will be on the basis of maintaining Capitalist and Imperialist interests. The I.L.P. has no faith in military "peace pacts" with Capitalist Governments, and does not consider that the working class should be involved in support of any war resulting from them.

*The Fascist Powers as a War Danger.* The I.L.P. recognizes that the policies of Mussolini and Hitler are a danger to world peace. They are determined to win new areas of exploitation as Empires. But this does not mean that Socialists should support the existing Empires against such a challenge. British Imperialism, which has grabbed a third of the world, is a constant menace to peace. Within the British Empire there is a dictatorship and tyranny similar in many respects to the conditions in Fascist countries. Socialist hatred of Fascism should not lead to defence of Imperialism; both are the fruits of Capitalism, and it is against Capitalism we must fight.

*"Democracy" the Alternative to Fascism?* The I.L.P. regards Fascism as inseparable from Capitalism and takes the view that the weakness of Capitalist "democracy" is an encouragement to Fascism. The failure of Capitalist "democracy" has given the Fascists the opportunity to appeal for a strong, challenging line under dictatorship. The alternative to Fascism is not defence of existing "democracy" but an appeal to the equally strong and challenging line of Workers Power and the use of that power to establish Socialism. Only in a classless society can there be a real democracy.

*A Popular Front or a Workers Front?* The Popular Front, based on the idea of an alliance between the working class and Capitalist "democrats" involves defence of Capitalist "democracy" and fatal compromises with it rather than an advance towards Workers' Power and Socialism. The I.L.P. therefore rejects it. The I.L.P. advocates a Workers' Front, fighting against immediate



injustices on the basis of the class struggle and advancing towards the Revolutionary Socialist struggle.

*Why not in the Labour Party?* The I.L.P. works for the political unity of the working class, but the present undemocratic structure of the Labour Party and its non-Socialist policy would require the I.L.P. to refrain from necessary Socialist action in Parliament and elsewhere. As

soon as there is reasonable hope that the Labour Party machine will be democratized and a Socialist policy adopted, the I.L.P. will reconsider the question of affiliation. In the Unity Campaign it is cooperating with the Left in the Labour Party, and it hopes that the Campaign will create conditions enabling unity to be achieved within the framework of the Labour Party.

## CONVENTION DISCUSSION

### LABOR PARTY DISCUSSION OUTLINE

by ERNEST ERBER

(Note: The following outline was prepared some time ago for use in the Y.P.S.L. We believe it to be excellent for discussion in branches and circles in preparation for the convention.)

1. No party other than the Socialist Party composed of the most class conscious and militant workers can lead the American working-class to a victory of Socialism over capitalism. Under no circumstances, therefore, can the Socialist Party afford to cease building and strengthening its own forces.

a. The "Victory of Socialism over Capitalism" can only be the result of a Social Revolution in which government power is wrested by the working-class from the capitalist class.

b. History has taught the working-class movement that the struggle for power is frequently illegal and violent.

c. Consequently the Party that leads the working-class must be a revolutionary Party composed of the most class-conscious, sacrificing, loyal, politically advanced, disciplined members of the working class.

d. No organization short of the above can carry through the working-class revolution.

2. The Socialist Party realizes that at the present moment, the vast majority of the American workers are in the camp of capitalist parties and that a Labor Party will more easily win the working masses away from those parties. The winning of the workers to the idea of independent working-class political action would be a step in the direction of mobilizing the workers for abolition of capitalism. Consequently, it is the duty of the S. P. to carry on a systematic campaign for the formation of such a party through the press and through the Socialist Party members in the trade unions and to participate in any serious attempts to organize a Labor Party.

a. The fact that a "vast majority of the workers are in the camp of capitalist parties" is one of the peculiarities of the American labor movement.

b. It is significant to note that in those countries where a Socialist Party became the political representative of the Labor movement, the Party had existed before the trade unions and had organized the trade unions. (The political organizations of the working-class had preceded its economic organization).

c. In Great Britain, the first organizations of the working-class were the trade unions. The struggles of the trade union movement taught the workers the need for political action. The result was a political federation of the trade unions, cooperatives, and other working-class organizations to form the Labor Party.

d. It is not necessary that either the program of a Labor Party call for the "abolition of capitalism" or that its leaders

believe in it, for the Labor Party to serve as an instrument to mobilize the workers for the overthrow of the profit system. Socialists are confident that (a) the role of the working-class in capitalist society, and (b) the logic of the class struggle will teach the workers, once they have set their foot on the road of class political action, that only complete government power for Labor and the socialization of industry can release them from the chains of wage slavery.

e. Since the trade union leaders are tied to the political machines of the old parties and, therefore, oppose a Labor Party, such a Party can only be the result of pressure from below. It is, therefore, the duty of Socialists to carry on persistent agitation in the trade unions for the organization of a Labor Party. This is brought before the membership by introducing resolutions recommending such action at union locals, conventions of internationals, city federations, and at the conventions of the A. F. of L. itself.

3. By a Labor Party we mean a party based on organized labor. We must guard against any party which is a Labor Party in name only. The S. P. must be careful not to participate in the formation of such a party unless a substantial number of important trade unions indicate an intention to become the base of such a party.

a. The term "Labor Party" refers to a specific type of Party; that formed by the already existing organizations of the working-class, including in their ranks the vast bulk of all organized workers, adopting independent political action as an additional weapon in the class struggle.

b. A "Labor Party" formed on the basis of the few trade union locals already sympathetic to the S. P., the unemployed, and a miscellaneous group of other organizations is a Labor Party in name only. In actuality, it is the Socialist Party with another name and a milder platform.

c. It is not necessary to wait until we have won over the entire A. F. of L. for a Labor Party. If the largest and most progressive unions in the A. F. of L. who contain the bulk of the A. F. of L. membership are ready to organize a Labor Party it would not only be foolish to wait for Green and Woll but criminal.

4. We favor a federated labor party composed of all political and economic labor organizations bound by organizational discipline but free to propagate their views within the ranks of the Labor Party.

a. A federated party is a federation of organizations. An individual membership party is based on affiliations of individuals.

b. We are willing to submit to the discipline of a non-Socialist majority in the Labor Party but insist on the right



to freely state our views and seek to educate the Labor Party to Socialism. We will never enter a Labor Party at the price of concealing our Socialism.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Why is it necessary under all circumstances to maintain the political independence of the Socialist Party?
2. To the development of the Labor movement in what country is the American situation similar?
3. Why are Socialists confident that they can win over the

Labor Party following for the overthrow of capitalism regardless of the type of program or leadership the Labor Party may be organized with?

4. By what means can the Socialists hasten the formation of a Labor Party?
5. What type of "Labor Party" is that in name only?
6. What is meant by a federated party?
7. Under what circumstances will the Socialist Party *not* enter a Labor Party?

### STATEMENT OF CONNECTICUT DELEGATES ON PARTY CONVENTION PROBLEMS

DEVERE ALLEN: I favor a policy for Socialists that will take them actively into labor unions, cooperatives and other economic organizations, subject to Party discipline. I think Socialists should work militantly with all mass organizations, emphasizing Socialist principles, not to the point of becoming offensive, but certainly without failing ever to establish what Socialist policy is and what values Socialism could bring.

I favor aggressive work for the establishment of a Farmer-Labor Party, subject to the conditions that it must not support capitalist candidates and must maintain democratic methods; I do not favor dropping the name of the Socialist Party or acting in a defeatist manner simply because satisfactory conditions of affiliation cannot be established. In no case do I favor the loss of identity and separate organization of the Socialist Party as a part of the larger Farmer-Labor Party that may come into existence.

I favor the reorganization of Party machinery to afford greater centralization, tighter discipline, greater speed in registering our viewpoint on public opinion, and more unified work.

I support unreservedly the anti-war position of the Party taken at the Cleveland Convention. I do not believe in the slogan of "collective security", put forward by certain radical parties, so-called, along with liberal elements, looking toward the use of collective warfare under imperialistic governments to suppress other imperialistic aggressors; rather I favor complete opposition to imperialistic war and non-cooperation with any capitalist government engaged in war for any purpose.

WALTER DAVIS: I believe in a Party-owned press and that all members and groups in the Party be granted the right to express their views in it, especially on Party matters.

The Socialist Party should cooperate with the labor unions to the largest extent, but should not try to dictate to them as to how their unions should be run. Party members should join the union of their industry.

As in the past the Socialist Party should oppose war and fascism and should cooperate with other groups as far as possible in opposition to these twin enemies of the human race.

When the labor movement and the farmers really want a Labor Party one will be formed. Until that time we should build up the present Socialist Party which I maintain is a real Labor Party. If a Labor Party is formed it should be on the basis of the British Labor Party, group affiliation.

Socialists should join the cooperative movement and help to keep it in close touch with and cooperate with the Socialist Party and the labor movement.

VICTOR HARRIS, COLIN McINTYRE, ABRAHAM PERLSTEIN, LOIS RAYMOND, HARRY ROSEN, CELIA

ROSTOW: Our stand on the chief issues facing the Convention is as follows: Replacing the present Declaration of Principles by one based on the Draft Program of the Left Wing and the series of perspectives published in the Socialist Call; (2) Support of the CIO units organization drive in the basic industries, but the Party must reserve the right to differ politically and in union strategy from the predominant CIO concepts of today; (3) Requiring Party members to accept Socialist discipline in mass organizations (unions, cooperatives, etc.), a discipline developed by Party members themselves thru their appropriate committees, local state, and national; (4) Recognition of the Labor Party question as one of tactics, not principle, the criterion being whether the creation of a Labor Party at any given time, will advance or retard the development of the workers toward revolutionary Socialism. In any event, the Socialist Party should retain its identity as an organization, whether within or without a Labor Party. (5) Party ownership of its press, acting thru responsible committees which are in close touch with the National Action Committee; (6) Revising the Party constitution so as to attain efficiency thru centralization of Party machinery; (7) Inner-Party democracy, allowing freedom of opinion on tactical methods, but combined with unity of action once Party policy on any given matter has been decided; (8) A coordinated program of fund-raising, local, state, and national, based on the principle of ability to pay (for members, that is); (9) Urging locals to require a minimum of activity from members; (10) Our stand on war and fascism is that contained in the Socialist Call perspectives.